

[Estelle Zabritz[ki]]

W3618

Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FORM A

Circumstances of Interview

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

630 Words

Industrial [?]

May 18 1939

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Betty Burke

ADDRESS 1339 South Troy Street

DATE May 4, 1939

SUBJECT Packinghouse worker

1. Date and time of interview May 1, May 3, evenings

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2. Place of interview 3658 South Hoyne Avenue

3. Name and address of informant Estelle Zabritzki 3658 South Hoyne Street

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

None

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

None

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Four Room house, 2nd floor back, stove heat, very neat and homey. Being married about two years and both working steady, they have all new and good furniture. They live in a cleaner, fairly well-to-do workers' residential section. By 'well-to-do' workers is meant the kind who have skilled jobs in the yards, foremen, small time office executives (from the yards). Three large Catholic churches dominate the social and community life of this small section. Plenty of saloons but all situated on the business streets, not, as in the real yards slums, eight blocks south, scattered thickly on every street, business or 'residential'.

FORM B

Personal History of Informant

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

Library of Congress

NAME OF WORKER Betty Burke

ADDRESS 1339 South Troy Street

DATE May 4, 1939

SUBJECT Packinghouse worker

NAME OF INFORMANT Estelle Zabritzki

1. Ancestry Lithuanian, American born
2. Place and date of birth Chicago, 23 years old
3. Family Married, Husband Lithuanian, American born 6 months old baby girl
4. Places lived in, with dates
South side of Chicago and back of yards
5. Education, with dates
Grammar school, two years of High at Englewood High
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
Never did anything but work in the yards
7. Special skills and interests

Her baby and her husband and her home are the most important things in her life. Union work comes next, but since the baby came she hasn't done much except attend its social affairs.

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8. Community and religious activities

Attends a YWCA center recently established in the yards area. Lauds it for its progressive ideas and stimulus to stockyard women workers. Raised a Catholic, but not very religious. Seldom goes to church.

9. Description of informant

A beauty, mild, smiling ways. Says she gets along very well at the yards because they think she's beautiful and dumb. The foremen would come and cry on her shoulders all the time about the union and she would have to be so solicitous and sympathetic and indignant about it all, [?] with a CIO button stowed away in her purse since the first day the union came to the plant.

10. Other Points gained in interview

FORM C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Betty Burke

ADDRESS 1339 South Troy Street

DATE May 4, 1939

Library of Congress

SUBJECT Packinghouse worker

NAME OF INFORMANT Estelle Zabritzki

I'll tell you how I got to working in the yards. I wanted to finish high school but we had a lot of sickness and trouble in my family just then; my father got t.b. and they couldn't afford to send me any more. Oh, I guess if I had begged and coaxed for moeny to go they would have managed but I was too proud to do that. I thought I'd get a job downtown in an office or department store and then maybe make enough to go back to school. Me and my girl friend used to look for work downtown every day. We lived right near the yards but we wouldn't think of working in that smelly place for anything. But we never got anything in office work and a year went by that way so one time we took a walk and just for fun we walked into Armour's where they hire the girls, you know. We were laughing and hoping they wouldn't give us applications, lots of times they send new girls away because there's so many laid off girls waiting to get back, and we really thought working in the yards was awful. Lots of girls do even now, and even some of them will have the nerve to tell people they don't work in the yards. They'll meet other girls who work there, at a dance or some wedding and they'll say they don't.

FORM D

Extra Comment

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

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NAME OF WORKER Betty Burke

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But you can always know they're lying, because mostly their finger nails are cracked and broken from always being in that pickle water; it has some kind of acid in it and it eats away the nails.

Well, in walks Miss McCann and she looks over everybody and what did she do but point at me and call me over to her desk. I guess she just liked my looks or something. She put me to work in Dry Casings, you might think it's dry there but it isn't, they just call it that to distinguish it from Wet Casings dept., which is where they do the first cleaning out of pig guts. The workers callit the 'Gut Shanty' and the smell of that place could knock you off your feet. Dry Casings isn't that bad but they don't take visitors through, unless it's some real important person who makes a point of it and wants to see. Lots of those ritzy ladies can't take it, they tighten up their faces at the entrance and think they're ready for anything, but before they're halfway through the place they're green as grass and vomiting like they never did before. The pickle water on the floors gets them all slopped up, just ruins their shoes and silk hose. And are they glad to get out! They bump into each other and fall all over themselves, just like cockroaches, 3 they're so anxious to get away and get cleaned up. We feel sorry for them, they look so uncomfortable.

I operated a power machine in Dry Casings. It's better where I am because the casings are clean and almost dry by the time they come to the machine and I sew them at one end. Mine is a semi-skilled job and I get good pay, piece work, of course. On an average of

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from \$23 . to \$27 . a week. In my dept. there aren't so many layoffs like in the other places. We work about eight months a year, but I was lucky, I only got it three times in the five years I was there. I think they sort of like me, Miss McCann and some of them.

But the first week I was there, you should have seen my hands, all puffed and swollen. I wasn't on sewing then, I was on a stretching machine. That's to see if the casing isn't damaged after the cleaning processes it goes through.

You know that pickle water causes salt ulcers and they're very hard to cure, nearly impossible if you have to keep working in the wet. The acids and salt just rot away a person's skin and bone if he just gets the smallest scratch or cut at work. Most of the girls in casings have to wear wooden shoes and rubber aprons. The company doesn't furnish them. They pay three dollars for the shoes and about one fifty for the aprons.

My husband got the hog's itch from working there. He can't go near the yards now but what he gets it back again. He used to have his hands and arms wrapped up in bandages clear up to his elbows, it was so bad. The company paid his doctor bills for a while till it got a little better but they broke up his seniority. They transferred him to another dept. 4 after he had worked 3 1/2 years in one place, and then after a couple months they laid him off because they said he was 'new' in that department. They just wanted to get rid of him now that he was sick and they had to keep paying doctors to cure him. Finally he got a job outside the yards so he said 'to hell with them'.